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### **What Your State Intellectual Freedom Committee Can Do**

*The AASL Intellectual Freedom Committee created the following suggested activities list to assist your state committee in promoting intellectual freedom in school library media programs. Be aware that the list is composed of possibilities rather than expectations, although communicating with your membership regarding available intellectual freedom resources should be a top priority. It may seem like a daunting list, but many of the tasks, such as encouraging members to participate in Banned Books Week, are easily undertaken by any group. Other suggestions on this list will require more planning by your committee and association leadership. Select an activity and get started!*

*One caution: do not provide legal advice. Refer members in need of legal assistance to state chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union, which have access to pro bono attorneys in each state who are knowledgeable and willing to help.*

*Finally, the American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom assists librarians facing a variety of intellectual freedom issues. Contact ALA for support at any point in dealing with challenges or advising members. [<http://www.ala.org/oif>, 800.545.2433, ext. 4220]*

1. Advertise through state electronic mailing lists the services that your state's intellectual freedom committee can offer to school library media specialists. These may include providing news from ALA's intellectual freedom community, advising and providing moral support on the book/resource challenge process, and educating members about strategies for advocating for minors' rights in school libraries.
2. Promote ALA and AASL resources to assist with book challenges through blogs, electronic mailing lists, newsletters, etc.
3. Promote intellectual freedom resources at the state conference by making free intellectual freedom-related materials available for attendees to pick up at the association's exhibit booth or an AASL booth. Information could include copies of AASL's "What is Intellectual Freedom?" brochure, ALSC's short flyer "Kids Know Your Rights," and YALSA's "Social Networking: A Guide for Teens."
4. Present a session or workshop at your state conference to raise awareness about materials challenges, self-censorship, or other intellectual freedom issues.
5. Establish an intellectual freedom web page on your state association site linking to ALA, AASL, ALSC, and YALSA intellectual freedom resources. Example: Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association,

URL: <http://www.wemtaonline.org> Path: About WEMTA/Intellectual Freedom/  
Intellectual Freedom Web Links

6. Organize a Special Interest Group for intellectual freedom issues within your association.
7. Write articles for your state association newsletter on topics related to intellectual freedom, including the Code of Ethics, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), social networking, and others.
8. Establish an intellectual freedom blog to discuss controversial issues related to challenges, privacy, self-censorship during selection of materials, minors' rights when using school library media programs, and other topics.
9. Develop a state or region-specific intellectual freedom handbook to assist library media specialists seeking best practices. Example: New York Library Association, URL: [www.nyla.org/index.php?page\\_id=104/](http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page_id=104/)
10. Pursue opportunities for sponsoring collaborative intellectual freedom programs between school and public libraries.
11. Encourage members to participate in Banned Books Week, which takes place during the fourth week in September each year.
12. Promote the message of Banned Books Week year-round and encourage members to celebrate the event when it makes most sense for them. Intellectual freedom and censorship issues may fit into the curriculum at a different point in the year, and Banned Books Week tools and resources are available to librarians at any time.
12. Write letters to the editor of local newspapers during Banned Books Week to promote the ideals of intellectual freedom in school libraries.
13. Encourage conversation among members at the building and district level about intellectual freedom issues, including selection and reconsideration policies and procedures. School library media specialists need to be informed about their policies and procedures and make sure this information and knowledge is not only internalized, but also shared with their teacher colleagues and administrators.
14. Encourage association members to read and submit questions about intellectual freedom issues to the Cooperative Children's Book Center's What IF? question and answer service located at <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/freedom/whatif/default.asp>.
15. Create and maintain a list to record challenges to resources in school library media programs and curricula, their geographic location and school level [elementary, middle school, or high school], and the resolution/result. Send the list annually

with the following information: title, level of school, reason for the challenge to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom via email: [oif@ala.org](mailto:oif@ala.org)/. Although the details collected should be kept confidential, the data on how many challenges are occurring, in what areas of the state, and the result could be valuable to the committee and state association membership. The state association would also be in a position, for example, to answer queries from their membership as to whether a particular title has been challenged previously and on what grounds.

16. Under the structure of your state library media association, create an Intellectual Freedom Network made up of 5-7 members who have experience with intellectual freedom concerns, such as challenges and filtering issues, and who might receive additional training on intellectual freedom basics from the association's Intellectual Freedom Committee. Members of the Intellectual Freedom Network would be willing to provide confidential moral support to colleagues facing a resource challenge, filtering problems, and/or other technology-related intellectual freedom issues. They might also act as a sounding board for colleagues in those situations, with the goal of decreasing the sense of fear and isolation that sometimes accompanies a challenge or other intellectual freedom matters. Example: Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association, Contact the president of WEMTA at <http://www.wemtaonline.org> for more information.
17. Identify contacts at state agencies and organizations that provide intellectual freedom information, resources, or services and collaborate with them. Library, reading, social studies, and science associations, as well as state level affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of English, are natural allies. Review and revise the list of contacts annually.
18. Contact other state IFCs to learn about what other groups are doing. Networking can help learn about best practices in other states, and can also be a source of support for your intellectual freedom group.
19. Join the [stateifc@ala.org](mailto:stateifc@ala.org) electronic mailing list, managed by ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom. Information is available at <http://lists.ala.org/sympa/info/stateifc/>
20. Sign up to receive ALA's IFAction news-only, no-discussion e-list of the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF). IFACTION also alerts subscribers to legislation affecting intellectual freedom issues, such as filtering, privacy, online social networks, media concentration, and network neutrality. Information is available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/ifgroups/ifan/ifactionb/ifaction.cfm/>.